



NORTH SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR REMEDIAL ACTION PLANS

THUNDER BAY REMEDIAL ACTION PLAN (RAP) Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

April 17, 2019 – 7 p.m.

Lakehead University
Advanced Technology and Academic Centre (ATAC 3004)
Thunder Bay, ON

INTRODUCTIONS/ATTENDANCE

J. Hall-Armstrong welcomed everyone and asked all present (listed below) to introduce themselves.

- **Gary Davies** – Thunder Bay District Stewardship Council
- **Trent Desaulniers** – Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO)
- **Frank Edgson** – Thunder Bay PAC Co-chair
- **Jean Hall-Armstrong** – Thunder Bay PAC Co-chair (meeting chair)
- **Gary Heinrichs** – Richardson Inc.
- **Gurpreet Mangat** – Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
- **Ashleigh Marcel** – Resolute Forest Products (online)
- **Reg Nelson** – LU – Geospatial Data Centre (GDC)
- **Samuel Pegg** – LU – RAP Office
- **Bill Skrepichuk** - Public
- **David Schnell** – PAC Member
- **Jan Schnell** – PAC Member
- **Mark Serediak** – PAC Member
- **Rob Stewart** - LU – RAP Office
- **Dawn Talarico** –Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)
- **Erica Tropea** – Eco Depot
- **Nathan Wilson** – LU – Graduate Student

REVIEW OF MINUTES OF November 7, 2018

The minutes of November 7, 2018 were reviewed. No errors or omissions were noted.

Fish Habitat – Brief History of BUI

Dr. Rob Stewart, Lakehead University

R. Stewart presented a brief overview of the fish habitat beneficial use impairment (BUI). He noted we haven't really discussed it much as a PAC since the last update in 2012. He also noted that this BUI, much like wildlife habitat had a number of priority actions, but no specific metrics. Rob noted that a goal over the next little bit will be to work with agencies to determine the status of this BUI. He noted that there were a number of actions to help improve fish habitat that were implemented following the Stage I Report. Rob added that it was important to make sure that these habitat features were providing the services and ecological benefits desired. His complete presentation is available on www.infosuperior.com.

AOC-wide Habitat Classification

Reg Nelson, Lakehead University

R. Nelson presented the PAC his work reviewing and classifying the substrate in the Thunder Bay harbour. Reg noted that the data he was working with was previously collected substrate mapping done by Hans Bieberhoff (ECCC). Reg stated that his goal was to review (and modify where needed) the categories used in the substrate mapping to classify and identify potential fish habitat. Reg found that the area around the Welcome Islands presented greater potential for fish habitat. He also noted that within the harbour breakwall the fine-grain substrates presented limited habitat potential due to a fair amount of fragmentation. Reg also noted that he included bathymetry data (three depth classes) with the four substrate data classes to arrive at 11 different potential habitat classes. Reg added that combined this information with research showing the different habitat that 23 different fish species prefer during their various life stages. However, without knowing a particular fish species of interest Reg noted that it would be difficult to draw conclusions since different species have different requirements. Reg's complete presentation is also available on www.infosuperior.com (combined with the fish habitat presentation from Rob Stewart).

Jean Hall-Armstrong said she was surprised that the vegetation and water levels seemed to be so low in certain places of the harbour given shipping traffic. Reg noted that ships usually accessed the harbour through northern portion of the breakwall or avoided the area indicated.

Rob Stewart noted that there would likely be data like this available for other AOCs, but he wondered what they were doing to make a quantitative assessment of fish habitat. He added that it would depend somewhat on the species we choose to focus on. Reg noted that, given it would be unfeasible to remediate the whole harbour bottom, perhaps the greatest benefits could be found in remediation projects along the shoreline and tributaries.

Nearshore Habitat Rehabilitation Monitoring

Dr. Rob Stewart, Lakehead University

Rob Stewart also provided a brief overview of the work that was being conducted by one of his graduate students - Michelle Willows. Michelle was looking at whether or not certain habitat features, installed in the earlier days of the RAP program, were providing suitable habitat benefits. He noted that her study was not meant to identify “good” or “bad” habitat but rather what benefits these features provided. Michelle utilized a smaller sized boat to collect high resolution side-scan sonar and water quality parameters. She was also able to dive on a number of sites and classify the aquatic vegetation present. The sites Michelle looked at (and the habitat value ranking), included the following:

- the McKellar embayments (moderate habitat value);
- Neebing-McIntyre floodway (minimal value);
- NOWPARC (high value);
- Sanctuary Island (moderate value);
- Current River (high value); and
- North Harbour (minimal-moderate value).

A summary of Michelle’s preliminary findings is available on www.infosuperior.com (also combined with the fish habitat presentation from Rob Stewart).

Jean Hall-Armstrong noted that the work in the Current River regarding the installation of boulders was actually done by the North Shore Steelhead Association (NSSA) and not the RAP. Rob agreed, clarifying that fish passage through the Current River was identified as a RAP target, but that much of the improvement work was done through the NSSA.

Frank noted that there was a lot of good habitat that was destroyed over time. He added that there was some substrate in the Current River that the MNRF was planning on replacing to support walleye habitat, but he was not sure if that has gone through or not.

Rob noted that there was a similar macrophyte community growing in the North Harbour as other sites. He added that this vegetation was actually growing and rooting within the contaminated wood fibres.

Gurpreet noted that the delisting criteria for fish habitat is separate from that of wildlife habitat criteria. The fish habitat criteria were finalized in the Stage 2 Report. She also noted that considering the assessments and given that habitat is there, they might be in a good position to begin preparing an assessment report. She also added that linking the BUI to fish populations, seems to show improvements there as well.

Jean Hall-Armstrong asked when MNRF did the fish population studies. Gurpreet said the study was probably done around 2016-17, but that the final report should be out soon. Jean asked if she could see the fisheries report.

Gurpreet noted that the report was still in draft but that she would follow up with Marilee Chase (MNRF) to see if the report was available.

ACTION ITEM #1: Gurpreet to follow-up with Marilee Chase (MNRF) to see if the fish populations report has been finalized.

Fish Habitat Discussion and Next Steps

Rob noted that since the majority of point sources of pollution have been dealt with most impacts to fish habitat comes from non-point sources like stormwater runoff. Frank Edgson asked if there was anything in the building code saying that you needed to have an oil-grit separator installed for certain locations. Rob noted that there wasn't anything related to stormwater. Rob noted that there are regulations if your business uses oil or grease, but there is nothing for stormwater. He added that most of the work that was being done by the City was installation of low-impact developments (LIDs).

Wildlife Habitat Update

Jean Hall-Armstrong noted that there wasn't anything really new to report regarding wildlife habitat. Gurpreet asked if the latest comments from the PAC Wildlife Subcommittee were the same as those the Steering Committee had. Rob replied that the comments the steering committee offered back to the PAC subcommittee were approved, and those comments were included in the latest delisting criteria. Gurpreet also noted that finalized delisting criteria for wildlife habitat could be included in the upcoming AOC Status Update.

Beaches Update

Gurpreet gave an update on the status of the beach closings BUI. She noted that the RAP Team was working on a status update report for beaches (available on www.infosuperior.com). At the last PAC meeting, Troy Sampson (TBDHU) gave a presentation on the new provincial guidelines for recreational water quality. Gurpreet noted that the delisting criteria was being revised to reflect these changes. She noted during her presentation that the latest data showed that the percentage of adverse conditions for the past two years were low compared to prior years using the new criteria. Gurpreet added that, if these trends continue for this coming year or next, we could see the 5-year average for days without adverse conditions rise above the 80% mark (as mentioned in the delisting criteria). She also provided an overview of the actions undertaken to address the other criterion for delisting beaches. She noted that a report presenting the case for delisting beach closings would likely be presented soon.

It was asked what prompted the change from 100 to 200 counts for E. coli. Gurpreet noted that the standard was being brought in line with many other jurisdictions in Canada. She added that in Europe the standard is as high as 500 counts. Jean Hall-Armstrong added that she has done some sampling in the past and when the counts were around 300 some children would complain.

Rob noted that in the early days the BUI was actually called beach closings and was revised to “beach advisories” to better reflect the conditions. Gurpreet noted that the current usage is now based around percentages as a risk.

North Harbour Update

Dawn gave an update on the North Harbour noting that a presentation to the public was given on February 5th at Lakehead University. She also noted that a presentation was given to City Council the night before. Some of the feedback at these presentations included: where the funding was coming from once a solution was selected, the effectiveness of the breakwall in preventing contamination from entering the drinking water protection zone, and concerns over the timeline. It was noted that the date to identify a preferred option would be around June 2020. She added that there was some discussion of the technical work that was being undertaken with reports being available in the summer.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the PAC is tentatively scheduled for June 19, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.